

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1 1. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for distributing [[a]] signals in a stackable unit,
 2 comprising:
 3 a first input connector of two or more input connectors;
 4 a second input connector of the two or more input connectors, wherein the first input
 5 connector is laterally spaced apart from the second input connector, and the
 6 first input connector has a particular spatial relationship to the second input
 7 connector;
 8 a first output connector of two or more output connectors;
 9 a second output connector of the two or more output connectors, wherein the first
 10 output connector is laterally spaced apart from the second output connector,
 11 and the first output connector has the same particular spatial relationship to
 12 the second output connector;
 13 wherein the two or more input connectors are disposed on a bottom plane of the
 14 stackable unit and the two or more output connectors are disposed on a top
 15 plane of the stackable unit, wherein the bottom plane and the top plane are
 16 vertically spaced apart;
 17 means for communicatively coupling the first input connector and the second output
 18 connector;
 19 wherein the first output connector is aligned substantially vertically with the first
 20 input connector and the second output connector is aligned substantially
 21 vertically with the second input connector, but the second output connector is
 22 not aligned substantially vertically with the first input connector; and
 23 means for terminating the first output connector.

1 2. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein the stackable unit is a
 2 stackable hub, wherein the two or more output connectors and the two or more input
 3 connectors are USB connectors, and wherein each of the two or more ~~output~~ input
 4 connectors is disposed in a foot of the stackable hub and each of the two or more

5 ~~input~~ output connectors is disposed in a top portion of the stackable hub in a position
6 substantially above a particular input connector of the two or more input connectors.

1 3. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein the stackable unit is a
2 stackable expansion module for network attached storage; the two or more output
3 connectors and the two or more input connectors are USB connectors; and each of the
4 two or more ~~output~~ input connectors is disposed in a foot of the stackable expansion
5 module and each of the two or more ~~input~~ output connectors is disposed in a top
6 portion of the stackable expansion module in a position substantially above a
7 particular input connector of the two or more input connectors.

1 4. (Original) The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein the two or more output connectors
2 comprise three or more output connectors; and wherein the apparatus further
3 comprises a means for terminating a third output connector of the three or more
4 output connectors, wherein the third output connector is spaced apart from both the
5 first output connector and the second output connector.

1 5. (Original) The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein an aggregate input connector
2 comprises the two or more input connectors; and an aggregate output connector
3 comprises the two or more output connectors.

1 6. (Original) The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein the two or more input connectors
2 are provided as two or more separate connectors and the two or more output
3 connectors are provided as two or more separate connectors.

1 7. (Original) The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein at least one of the two or more
2 input connectors is located at one extreme of the apparatus and at least one of the two
3 or more output connectors is located at a corresponding extreme on an opposite
4 portion of the apparatus.

- 1 8. (Original) The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein the stackable unit is a stackable
2 audio component, each of the two or more input connectors is capable of receiving an
3 audio signal.
- 1 9. (Original) The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein the stackable unit is a stackable
2 video component, each of the two or more input connectors is capable of receiving a
3 video signal.
- 1 10. (Original) The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein each connector of the two or more
2 input connectors and each connector of the two or more output connectors is capable
3 of transmitting power and the second output connector is terminated by providing no
4 power over the second output connector.
- 1 11. (Original) The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein the stackable unit is a stackable
2 recording device and each connector of the two or more input connectors and each
3 connector of the two or more output connectors is capable of transmitting a
4 recordable signal and the means for terminating the second output connector
5 comprises a means for transmitting a particular signal that indicates that the
6 recordable signal is not being transmitted over the second output connector.
- 1 12. (Original) The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein the second input connector of the
2 two or more input connectors carries a particular signal, wherein the particular signal
3 is a terminating signal and the apparatus further comprises a means for detecting the
4 terminating signal.
- 1 13. (Original) The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein each connector of the two or more
2 input connectors and each connector of the two or more output connectors is capable
3 of transmitting two or more signals.

1 14. (Original) The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein the stackable unit is a microchip
2 and wherein each connector of the two or more input connectors and each connector
3 of the two or more output connectors comprises one or more pins on the microchip.

1 15. (Original) The apparatus of Claim 14, wherein each connector of the two or more
2 input connectors and each connector of the two or more output connectors is capable
3 of transmitting a clock signal; and the means for terminating the second output
4 connector comprises sending a signal other than the clock signal over the second
5 output connector.

1 16. (Currently Amended) ~~An apparatus for distributing a signal in a stackable device~~ The
2 apparatus of Claim 1, further comprising:
3 means for providing a first ~~output~~ signal ~~to a first~~ through the stackable unit through
4 ~~a first~~ the second output connector ~~of two or more output connectors to a~~
5 plurality of stackable units that are disposed above the stackable unit, wherein
6 the two or more output connectors comprise three or more output connectors;
7 means for providing a second ~~output~~ signal ~~to~~ through the ~~first~~ stackable unit through
8 a ~~second~~ third output connector of the two or more output connectors, ~~wherein~~
9 ~~the first output connector is spaced apart from the second output connector to~~
10 the plurality of stackable units; and
11 means for determining which signal is provided to a particular unit of the plurality of
12 stackable units by determining through which output connector a particular
13 signal is being provided.

1 17. (Currently Amended) A method of distributing [[a]] signals in a stackable unit, the
2 method comprising the steps of:
3 providing a first input connector of two or more input connectors;
4 providing a second input connector of the two or more input connectors, wherein the
5 first input connector is laterally spaced apart from the second input connector,

6 and the first input connector has a particular spatial relationship to the second
7 input connector;
8 providing a first output connector of two or more output connectors;
9 providing a second output connector of the two or more output connectors, wherein
10 the first output connector is laterally spaced apart from the second output
11 connector, and the first output connector has the same particular spatial
12 relationship to the second output connector;
13 wherein the two or more input connectors are disposed on a bottom plane of the
14 stackable unit and the two or more output connectors are disposed on a top
15 plane of the stackable unit, wherein the bottom plane and the top plane are
16 vertically spaced apart;
17 communicatively coupling the first input connector and the second output connector;
18 wherein the first output connector is aligned substantially vertically with the first
19 input connector and the second output connector is aligned substantially
20 vertically with the second input connector, but the second output connector is
21 not aligned substantially vertically with the first input connector; and
22 terminating the first output connector.

- 1 18. (Currently Amended) ~~A method of distributing a signal in a stackable unit, the~~
2 ~~method~~ The method of Claim 17, further comprising the steps of:
3 providing a first ~~output~~ signal ~~to a first~~ through the stackable unit through ~~a first the~~
4 second output connector ~~of two or more output connectors~~ to a plurality of
5 stackable units that are disposed above the stackable unit, wherein the two or
6 more output connectors comprise three or more output connectors;
7 providing a second ~~output~~ signal ~~to~~ through the ~~first~~ stackable unit through a ~~second~~
8 third output connector of the two or more output connectors, ~~wherein the first~~
9 ~~output connector is spaced apart from the second output connector to the~~
10 plurality of stackable units; and
11 determining which signal is provided to a particular unit of the plurality of stackable
12 units by determining through which output connector a particular signal is
13 being provided.

1 19. (New) The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein a first signal carried by the first input
2 connector is transmitted through the second output connector for consumption by a
3 different stackable unit, and wherein a second signal carried by the second input
4 connector is consumed by the stackable unit.

1 20. (New) The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein the number of the two or more input
2 connectors determines the maximum number of stackable units to which the stackable
3 unit is capable of distributing signals.

1 21. (New) An apparatus for distributing signals in a stackable unit, comprising:
2 a first input connector of four or more input connectors, wherein the first input
3 connector is disposed in a first foot of the stackable unit;
4 a second input connector of the four or more input connectors, wherein the second
5 input connector is disposed in a second foot of the stackable unit;
6 a third input connector of the four or more input connectors, wherein the third input
7 connector is disposed in a third foot of the stackable unit;
8 a fourth input connector of the four or more input connectors, wherein the fourth
9 input connector is disposed in a fourth foot of the stackable unit;
10 wherein the first input connector, the second input connector, the third input
11 connector, and the fourth input connector are laterally spaced apart from each
12 other;
13 a first output connector of four or more output connectors, wherein the first output
14 connector is disposed in a top portion of the stackable unit and is aligned
15 substantially vertically with the first input connector;
16 a second output connector of the four or more output connectors, wherein the second
17 output connector is disposed in the top portion of the stackable unit and is
18 aligned substantially vertically with the second input connector;
19 a third output connector of the four or more output connectors, wherein the third
20 output connector is disposed in the top portion of the stackable unit and is
21 aligned substantially vertically with the third input connector;

22 a fourth output connector of the four or more output connectors, wherein the fourth
23 output connector is disposed in the top portion of the stackable unit and is
24 aligned substantially vertically with the fourth input connector;
25 a first communication link that couples the first output connector and the second input
26 connector, wherein the first output connector is not aligned substantially
27 vertically with the second input connector;
28 a second communication link that couples the second output connector and the third
29 input connector, wherein the second output connector is not aligned
30 substantially vertically with the third input connector;
31 a third communication link that couples the third output connector and the fourth
32 input connector, wherein the third output connector is not aligned
33 substantially vertically with the fourth input connector;
34 wherein a signal carried by the first input connector is consumed by the stackable
35 unit; and
36 wherein the fourth output connector is electrically terminated.